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## **Senate Seeks Answers On Mental Health Spending, Services Provided in Michigan**

*Sikkema appoints Sens. Hammerstrom, Stamas to examine mental health system, suggest ways to improve care and accountability*

LANSING – Senate Majority Leader Ken Sikkema today charged two key committee chairs to examine troubling shortcomings in Michigan’s mental health system and recommend solutions to improve the quality of patient care and increase accountability among providers.

Sikkema has asked Sen. Beverly Hammerstrom, R-Temperance, chair of the Senate Health Policy Committee, and Sen. Tony Stamas, R-Midland, chair of the Senate Department of Community Health Appropriations Subcommittee, to hold joint hearings to examine Michigan’s mental healthcare system. A series of hearings is scheduled to begin the week of September 15.

“Our first priority is to make sure patients receive the care and services they need,” said Sikkema, R-Wyoming. “But we also need to find out why nearly 40 cents of every dollar spent on mental health care in Michigan is lost to administrative costs and non-patient related services. Michigan had doubled mental health care spending in the last decade, yet there is little or no accountability to ensure that money is being spent caring for patients.”

Sikkema cited a recent Detroit News investigation of mental health care in Southeast Michigan in calling for the joint committee hearings. The News’ investigation found that nearly 40 percent of mental health care funding was used to cover administrative and other costs not directly related to patient care. The report also quoted Wayne County officials as saying there was not enough accountability or oversight to ensure that state-appropriated mental health care funding was paying for treatment and other patient services.

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Sikkema also said the joint committee hearings will examine mental health care services throughout Michigan to see if the same problems facing Southeast Michigan exist in other regions of the state.

“The joint hearings will allow the committee to examine the positive features of mental health programs in Michigan and to identify problems that need to be resolved through policy changes,” Sikkema said.

The hearings will provide individuals throughout the state with an opportunity to share their concerns on the mental health system. The testimony collected will be used to assist the Michigan Legislature in determining the necessary policy changes in the delivery and accountability of mental health services.

The joint committee will investigate if Michigan’s mental health services are being delivered in a manner consistent with the current federal Medicaid waiver as well as how the system can be improved with current resources.

“The recommendations issued by the joint committee hearings of the Health Policy and Department of Community Health Appropriations Subcommittee will allow Michigan to continue improving the way mental health care patients are served in the state,” Sikkema said.

The joint committee will issue its recommendations to the full Senate later this year.